

# BUSINESS PLAN



Cuckfield Fayre 1789

Thomas Rowlandson



## CUCKFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

*There are three tiers of local government, each with different responsibilities*

*Cuckfield Parish Council is the first local tier with an important role to play in promoting the village, representing its interests and supporting the work of different groups within the community.*

*Mid Sussex District Council is the second tier and responsible for services including housing and environmental services, planning applications, street cleaning and litter collection, leisure, tourism, recreation and events, pest control and road closures.*

*West Sussex County Council are the highest tier. They are responsible for education, highways, health & social services, public rights of way, land registry, fire services and libraries*

## Welcome and Introduction

**This is Cuckfield Parish Council's Business Plan and it lays out in detail the Council's Vision for the village over the next three years (2016-2019) and the projects we are planning which will deliver this.**

The business plan sets out the priorities for the Parish Council which are both deliverable and provide good value for money to the community.

Importantly they are within our control to progress and reinforce the strategic vision for Neighbourhood Plan. The plan has been produced taking into account adopted policies within our Neighbourhood Plan and the Cuckfield Infrastructure Assessment.

The Neighbourhood Plan sets out the Parish's Vision For Cuckfield as being:

***A Neighbourhood Plan that ensures Cuckfield will continue to thrive, meeting the changing needs of the community whilst preserving the distinctive character, landscape, and setting of the village that has evolved over nine centuries of history.***

This document provides a short summary for each of the committees within the Parish Council (see right) and the projects they have set out to achieve. It also highlights other key parish council activities, such as the Neighbourhood Plan.

Some projects are aspirational and may depend on other bodies, where this occurs it is mentioned in the text to avoid any uncertainty.

We would like to share these plans with the village and would welcome feedback and comment.

## What is the Parish Council ?

The Parish Council has ten elected (non political) and co-opted volunteer councillors who live within the parish boundary.

They are supported by office staff, caretakers and ground staff. The committees below are made up of councillors:

**Community Building** – Queen's and Village Halls

**Planning** – Statutory consultee to all planning applications

**Roads & Traffic** – Highways improvements through the village

**Environment** – General amenities and facilities, including the church yard

**Estates** - Open Spaces

**Finance and General Purpose**- Funding and compliance

# Cuckfield Neighbourhood Plan

The Neighbourhood Plan and its policies now form part of the statutory local 'Development Plan' and are regularly used as a benchmark by the Planning Committee when we discuss planning applications in the parish, and for our future infrastructure aims and objectives.

We are committed to ensuring that Mid Sussex Local Planning Authority interpret them as we had intended, as they make their decisions – after all, it's what residents voted for in the 2014 referendum.

Cuckfield is a unique place to live, and the key issue is to meet the Plan objectives highlighted above.

This translates to ensuring some development is allowed in appropriate, designated areas, whilst defending against major extensions into the surrounding countryside, preserving the outstanding views to the Downs and Ouse Valley, the gap to Haywards Heath and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and securing the infrastructure Cuckfield needs for the future.

An example of this was in working with residents to reduce the impacts of the current Ardingly Road development, safeguarding the views to the Downs and the new "Horsefield Green" public open space for the parish.

Whilst a great deal is done in Councillors' spare time, there are significant costs involved in our planning activities, especially when it is necessary to be involved in Planning Inspectorate Appeals (as we have on six occasions during just this year).

Unfortunately, there is ever increasing, intense pressure from developers to build where it is profitable, and the open fields around Cuckfield are a prime target. With Mid Sussex District Council struggling over several years with its own District Plan and the government continuing to relax planning laws, our Neighbourhood Plan is the only practical defence against a major development on our doorstep that would change Cuckfield forever, as we are about to see at the other end of Hanlye Lane!



## ***Our aims:***

To ensure the continuing rigorous application of Neighbourhood Plan policies by Mid Sussex District Council and the Planning Inspectorate in all planning matters, which will uphold the Plan aims and objectives and recognise the importance of the Built Up Area Boundary, strategic views, landscape, built and natural environment and coalescence.

In particular, to progress requirements highlighted in the Cuckfield Infrastructure Assessment (part of the Neighbourhood Plan) to ensure the village can fulfill its needs.

# Communication and Governance

Cuckfield Parish Council aims to be professional, competent and to be open and accountable in all we do in order to ensure the sound financial management of our resources.

This includes continuous promotion and public participation in Parish Council activities and initiatives, ensuring we are meeting all required laws as well as good governance practice.

## **Our aims:**

Be well informed about the needs and opinions of the Parish's residents and businesses by consulting with them on major issues.

Consult with other tiers of local government to ensure the parish's interests are best served.

Provide access to all relevant local information, news and activities via an easy to use and up to date website.

Deal with enquiries and fault reports from members of the public speedily and efficiently.

Work with traders to ensure the village centre is sustainable and vibrant for the community, recognising the importance of a general store and Post Office in the village centre.

Update the Communications Plan.

Enhance the existing Parish Council website to improve the user experience, providing access to local government and signposting people to other service providers.

Continue to provide opportunities for public interaction and comments at each Parish Council meeting.

Share a report of the previous year's Council activities at the Annual Parish Meeting.

Keep up to date on district, regional or national issues affecting the Parish Council.

Appoint representatives to appropriate external agencies and committees.

Continue to share regular news updates via Cuckfield Life.

Improved signage for facilities and tourist signage (Museum, Toilets, Village Centre).

# Planning

Planning and development continues to take up a large part of the Parish Council's time and resources.

We review and comment to the Local Planning Authority (MSDC) as a statutory consultee on every planning application within the parish. These have risen considerably in number over recent years, as many residents have chosen to extend, rather than move, during the economic downturn. This year 44 applications have been reviewed, and we have objected to 8 of these, on the basis that they do not meet Neighborhood Plan policies.

## **Our aims:**

Regular and ongoing monitoring of the Neighbourhood Plan policy targets are to review the success of the Plan and to identify whether any changes may be required in the future.

Continuing discussions with MSDC over the production of the District Plan.

Discussions with Taylor Wimpey (Buttinghill Drive) and Martin Grant (Horsefield Green) on the impact of these developments and resulting open spaces.

Expand Blunts Wood and Paiges Meadow Local Nature Reserve into the Borde Hill Millennium Wood, working with MSDC and Borde Hill.

# Environment

The Parish Council seeks to maintain the character of the village (especially the two conservation areas) and to extend good environmental practice to all parts of the village.

## **Our aims:**

Provide annual High Street floral displays plus winter flowering planting in selected areas.

Work with Burgess Hill Town Council teams to control the timing of cutting flower rich verges and to continue the maintenance of our numerous Twittens.

Administer the upkeep of the churchyard to ensure its good maintenance and diverse ecological mix for the much valued calm, peaceful atmosphere.

Improved children's play equipment at Chapelfields. (S106 contribution)

Continued collaboration with enthusiasts who organise the summer public access days to the Parish Council-owned ROC Nuclear Bunker.

Run our two popular allotment sites in a way that is fair to everybody and take over the Glebe Road site from MSDC

Seek advice from expert ecologists.

Improve the flowering content of our meadow surrounding the bunker by a winter grazing scheme, bramble control and carefully timed seasonal grass cutting.

Undertake environmentally sustainable activities such as continuing the sheep grazing in the small meadow and retain bee hives in the Observer Field.

Install an outdoor exercise area for adults, to be situated either at Whitemans Green or in Worsely Memorial Ground.

New Club House facilities in Worsely Memorial Ground.

Take over the Allotments at Glebe Road from MSDC and incorporate into Village Allotments plan.

# Cuckfield Village Hall

The Parish Council purchased the Youth Club building in London Lane in 2015 with a public works loan of £200,000. We did this to secure the future of groups such as the Pre-school playgroup, Kumon Learning Centre and others. It is now managed by the Community Buildings committee.

These groups would have been threatened with closure if the building had been sold by WSCC for development. An opening ceremony was held in September 2015 and the building was formally renamed Cuckfield Village Hall.

A number of maintenance projects have been undertaken by volunteers since, such as the entrance and porch repairs by Building Heroes, and repainting the exterior.

## **Our aims:**

To maintain accessibility with affordable hire charges.

Undertake a series of projects to improve the user experience, including decoration, storage space and other facilities.

# Estates

The Estates Committee will oversee the acquisition of the new public open space proposed at the Horsefield Green and Buttinghill Drive developments

It will also oversee the management and running of these new open spaces, alongside our existing land ownership at the Observer Field and Courtmead Road.

## **Our aims:**

Acquire the new Open Space at Horsefield Green and Buttinghill Drive.

Create a long-term and sustainable management plan for each new site.

To maintain and preserve all parish-owned open spaces (including the Observer Field) for the benefit of the community and environment.

Collaborate with enthusiasts who organise summer public access days to the Parish Council-owned ROC nuclear bunker.

# Finance

The Council Finance Committee oversees the expenditure of the Council. Income is predominantly from the Council Tax Precept, other grants, and revenue from our activities such as hiring of the Queen's Hall.

Funding and budgets are debated and set annually and recommendations made to full Council regarding all resourcing requirements..

Approximately half of our annual expenditure is on employees, insurances and contractors for maintenance, alongside regular administrative running costs.

We also fund village improvement projects highlighted in this plan, such as highways enhancements (with contributions from recent housing developments), and collaborate with other organisations for projects such as the recent playground improvements. A key cost this year has been the purchase of the Village Hall, enabled with a £200,000 loan, repayable over 25 years.

## **Our aims:**

To provide efficient and prudent use of Parish Council resources.

# Community Buildings

The Community Buildings Committee oversees the operation and maintenance of the Queen's and Village Halls.

The Queen's Hall is licensed to hold civil marriage and naming ceremonies and will seat 100 people in the main hall and 35 in the first floor council chamber. The Hall hosts many activities ranging from dog training to tea dances.

## **Our aims:**

In order for it to continue to look its best for existing and future hirers, a programme of internal redecoration is in hand and the work will be completed later in the year. A challenge during this period has been the continued use of the facilities whilst this work has been progressing. For example we had the main hall redecorated during the Easter holidays. External work has also recently been completed on the lead roof over the entrance hall and to the roof over the museum.

A key obligation is to ensure that safety requirements are met for all hirers and our staff. To this end we have undertaken Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) and a Fire Risk Assessment over the past year, and implemented their recommendations.

New logo'd clothing has been purchased to allow hirers to easily identify our caretakers.



# Roads and Traffic

The Roads and Traffic Committee represents the Parish in all matters relating to highways issues within the village. We work closely with West Sussex Highways Authority to implement traffic calming measures and maintain pavements.

Some recent successes are the two new zebra crossings installed in Ardingly Road, the Puffin crossings on both London Road and London Lane, and the traffic calming at Whitemans Green.

The committee also manage the maintenance of the council owned street lights, and have recently negotiated amendments to the new street lighting scheme within the village in order that heritage lamp heads were used throughout the conservation areas of the village instead of the modern lamp heads proposed, thus maintaining the distinctiveness of these areas.

'Section 106' funds from developer contributions allow us to fund these projects.

Further traffic calming aims (to the right) are planned for the future.

## **Our aims:**

**London Lane Traffic Calming** - Plans have been drawn up, these are available at the Parish office. We are awaiting the release of S106 funds to allow us to proceed.

**Additional Car Parking** - Expand the Recreation Ground and Whitemans Green car parks (working with MSDC) with improved access to the village centre.

**HGV Restrictions Through Village** - We are working with Lindfield and other villages to progress a co-ordinated plan to require HGVs to use main roads and have delivery only access to Mid Sussex villages (working with Highways and Police Authorities).

**Pedestrian Safety and Highways Improvements at Whitemans Green Roundabout** – realign the roundabout together with the introduction of tactile paving.

Design plans are available in the Parish Office.